

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY OSLO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2545

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 4982

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NO, SV, TGEN

SUBJ: NANSEN DRIFT STATION ARTICLES TOUCH OFF PRESS EXCHANGE AND
BRING PRIME MINISTER'S CLARIFICATION

REFS: (A) STATE 237719, (B) OSLO 4688

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SUMMARY: A REPORT BY ONE OF THE TWO NEWSMEN WHO MET WITH DEPART-
MENT OFFICIALS SEPT 24 TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSED NANSEN DRIFT
STATION PROJECT HAS STIRRED UP PRESS ALLEGATIONS THAT THE US
PLANS TO BUILD AN AIR BASE ON SVALBARD IN CONNECTION WITH THE
PROJECT AND THAT THE NORWEGIANS HAVE INVITED US TO DO SO. THE
FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS DENIED THE PRESS ALLEGATIONS AND THE PRIME
MINISTER HAS CHOSEN TO WEIGH IN TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT.
THE OUTBURST POINTS UP THE SENSITIVITY OF THE SVALBARD ISSUES
AND THE NEED TO ENSURE THAT WHATEVER WE SAY OR DO, THERE IN
SCIENTIFIC FIELD IS CONSISTENT WITH MAIN POLICY LINES NORWEGIANS
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HAVE ESTABLISHED FOR THESE ACTIVITIES UNDER SVALBARD TREATY,

PARTICULARLY PEACEFUL PURPOSES PROVISIONS. END SUMMARY
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1. NEWSPAPER STORIES ON PROPOSED NANSEN DRIFT STATION
PROJECT BASED ON DISCUSSION HELD IN DEPT SEPT 24 (STATE 237719)
HIT OSLO NEWSPAPERS SEPT 27 AND CREATED AN UPROAR LASTING SEVERAL
DAYS. THE DIN WAS SET OFF BY STATEMENT CONTAINED IN LEAD OF
CONSERVATIVE "MORGENBLADET" ACCOUNT FROM NORWEGIAN TELEGRAM
BUREAU THAT US PROJECT ENVISIONED "ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AMERICAN
AIR BASE AT LONGYEARBYEN" TO SUPPLY DRIFT STATION. LATER SAME
DAY SENSATIONALIST JOURNAL "DAGBLADET" HEADLINED THAT NORWAY
HAD INVITED THE US TO SVALBARD TO BALANCE OFF STRONG SOVIET
PRESENCE. IT SAID THE US BASE WOULD OFFICIALLY BE USED TO
SERVICE DRAFT STATION, BUT THERE WAS LITTLE DOUBT, IT SAID
ACCORDING TO STATE DEPARTMENT SOURCES, THAT THIS PAVED THE
WAY FOR A BROADER AMERICAN PRESENCE ON SVALBARD. MEANWHILE
AN ARTICLE BY LABOR PARTY DAILY "ARBEIDERBLADET" BY BJORN
HANSEN, BASED PRESUMABLY ON SAME DISCUSSION AS NTB ARTICLE,
RELATED A STRAIGHT FORWARD ACCOUNT SUCH AS THAT OUTLINED IN REF-
TEL A.

2. THE CLAIM THAT THE US WOULD BE ESTABLISHING A BASE AND
PARTICULARLY THAT THE NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT HAD INVITED US TO DO
SO IN SPITE OF THE SVALBARD TREATY DEMILITARIZATION PROVISIONS
AND POLICIES OF THE NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT,
TOUCHED OFF A VIGOROUS PRESS EXCHANGE, WHICH
HOPEFULLY HAS BEEN QUIETED BY FOREIGN MINISTER
STATEMENTS AND FINALLY BY A STATEMENT FROM PRIME MINISTER NORDLI
HIMSELF.

3. NORDLI FELT SERIOUSNESS OF CASE REQUIRED HIS PERSONAL EARLY
INTERVENTION AND IN A SPEECH IN HOLE EVENING SEPT 28 HE REFERRED
TO SVALBARD CASE NOTING THAT IN EXERCISING ITS SOVEREIGNTY ON
SVALBARD NORWAY MUST ASSURE RIGHTS FOR ALL SVALBARD TREATY
PARTIES TO PURSUE PEACEFUL ACTIVITIES THERE, AND HE ADDED,
"OUR SOVERIEIGNTY STATUS MUST BE BASED ON THE INTERNATIONAL
CREDIBILITY OF OUR DETERMINATION AND ABILITY TO CARRY OUT THEE LETTER
ADN SPIRIT OF THE SVALBARD TREATY. IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY REGRE-
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TTABLE IF "GROUNDLESS SPECULATIONS IN THE PRESS WERE TO SHAKE
THIS CREDIBILITY," HE SAID. NORDLI DEFINED MAIN ELEMENT OF NORWAY'S
SVALBARD POLICY AS THE MAINTENANCE OF PEACE AND STABILITY
IN THE AREA, AND HE STRESSED NORWAY'S EXERCISE OF SOVEREIGNTY
MUST ENSURE NON-MILITARY USE OF SVALBARD.

4. RESPONDING TO QUERIES ON THE "DAGBLADET" ARTICLE THE FOREIGN
MINISTRY ISSUED A RELEASE AFTERNOON SEPT 27 STATION THAT REPORTS

ALLEGING NORWEGIANS HAVE INVITED US TO ESTABLISH AIRFIELD OR THAT US HAD APPROACHED NORWEGIAN AUTHORITIES ABOUT ESTABLISHING SUCH AN AIRFIELD WERE INCORRECT. IT SAID NORWEGIANS KNOW OF PROPOSED SCIENTIFIC PROJECT AND KNOW AMERICANS HAVE CONSIDERED USING SVALBARD AIRPORT FOR SUPPLYING PROJECT RESEARCH SHIP. RELEASE SAID THAT IF US APPROACHES NORWEGIANS FORMALLY REQUESTING USE OF SVALBARD AIRPORT FOR SUCH PURPOSES, REQUEST WILL BE CONSIDERED IN RELATION SVALBARD TREATY PROVISIONS, IT NOTED THAT IN 1971 WHEN GOVERNMENT ADOPTED RESOLUTION TO BUILD SVALBARD AIRPORT, ALL TREATY STATES WERE INFORMED AND NOTIFIED THAT AIRPORT WOULD BE FREELY AVAILABLE FOR USE BY ALL TREATY PARTIES "ON THE EXPLICIT CONDITION THAT IT SHOULD ONLY BE USED FOR CIVILIAN PURPOSES."

5. LATER SAME EVENING MFA UNDER SECRETARY THORVALD STOLTENBERG WAS INTERVIEWED ON NATIONAL TV TO EMPHASIZE FACT AND POLICY DEFINED IN MFA PRESS RELEASE. MEANWHILE THE STATEMENTS FROM A WIDE RANGE OF OFFICIALS AND SO-CALLED EXPERTS, SOME ACCURATE, OTHER NOT ACCURATE OR UNHELPFUL KEPT THE MEDIA OCCUPIED WITH THE SUBJECT FOR PAST THREE DAYS.

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6. COMMENT: THE PURPOSE OF NORWEGIAN OFFICIALS HAS BEEN TO SET FORWARD THE FACTS OF THE DRIFT STATION PROJECT AS THEY KNOW THEM AND AT THE SAME TIME TO REASSURE THE PUBLIC AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE IN NORWAY'S POLICY TOWARD SVALBARD OR ITS ADMINISTRATION OF THE TREATY, PARTICULARLY THE PROVISIONS FOR EQUAL ACCESS TO TREATY PARTIES AND DEMILITARIZATION. THEY ARE ESPECIALLY MINDFUL OF THIS OBLIGATION BECAUSE OF THE STRONG PUBLIC INTEREST IN SVALBARD GENERALLY AND

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THE SENSITIVITY OF TREATY PARTIES TO BARENTS SEA ISSUES.

7. WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT THE MISUNDERSTANDING OR MISINTERPRETATION HAS BEEN RECTIFIED. IN THEAT REGARD THE PROMPT REPORT OF DISCUSSIONS IN DEPARTMENT (STATE 237719) WAS HELPFUL. HOWEVER, IN MENTIONING A "SPECIAL STAGING FACILITY WHEREVER LOCATED", PARA 3 OF THE TELEGRAM DOES RAISE A QUESTION OF WHAT KIND OF FACILITY AND WHERE IT WOULD BE LOCATED, WHICH MIGHT HAVE LED TO KIND OF MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT ESTABLISHMENT OF US AIRFIELD ON SVALBARD WHICH APPEARED IN THE NEWS ACCOUNT. THE ISSUE POINTS UP THE EXTRAORDINARY SENSITIVITY OF SVALBARD MATTERS AND THE NEED FOR US TO CONTINUE TO EXERCISE GREAT CARE AND ACCURACY IN STATEMENTS ON SVALBARD MATTERS.

8. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE DRIFT

STATION PROJECT, AND OTHER SUCH SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES WHICH
WOULD ENHANCE THE WESTERN PRESENCE IN SVALBARD, BE CONDUCTED
IF THEY ARE SCIENTIFICALLY SOUND. WE KNOW THE NORWEGIANS WOULD
WELCOME SUCH UNDERTAKINGS AS LONG AS THEY CONFORM TO THE
GUIDELINES THEY HAVE OUTLINED IN THEIR SVALBARD POLICY AND IN
PARTICULAR MEET THE "CIVILIAN PURPOSES"
REQUIREMENTS.
ANDERS

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